

Bishop Slattery's homily in DC: What does disobedience look like?

Joshua J. McElwee | Apr. 26, 2010 NCR Today

In the news today is Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa, Okla. This Saturday he celebrated a traditionalist, Latin language Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.



[Slattery's homily focused on his understanding of suffering and obedience](#) [1] in the light of the current sex abuse crisis. In the past Slattery has taken courageous stands regarding the individual's obligation to be obedient.

Facing the passage by the Oklahoma legislature of strict anti-immigrant legislation in 2006, Slattery publicly announced that he could not support the legislation and would continue his ministry to undocumented immigrants.

As Catholic News Service reported at the time, Slattery said that, if a law were to be passed criminalizing the act of aiding illegal immigrants, "then I will become a criminal."

"When it becomes a crime to love the poor and serve their needs, then I will be the first to go to jail for this crime, and I pray that every priest and every deacon in this diocese will have the courage to walk with me into that prison," Slattery said in April 2006.

The bill in question, the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act 2007, is now law. Among many of its provisions it makes it a felony for any person to knowingly give an undocumented immigrant a ride and forbids the state from providing such immigrants virtually any social services.

In that case it seems Slattery's understanding of obedience was fairly complex, perhaps summed up like this: Although citizens owe a certain amount of allegiance to their government and its laws, when that government goes too far, or violates human dignity, it's the responsibility of the individual to discern whether the government or its laws should be followed.

One wonders how that understanding might apply to the church.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/21/2017 - 01:43): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/bishop-slatterys-homily-dc-what-does-disobedience-look>

Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/node/18047>